

Please ensure wide distribution of this message.

The death of George Floyd is a national tragedy. Every American should be outraged that the conduct exhibited by police in Minneapolis can still happen in 2020. We all wish it were not possible for racism to occur in America, a country founded on the sacred ideal that “all men (and women) are created equal” and have the “unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” But it does, and we are at a moment where we must confront what is.

To the Airmen who are mourning, angry, or weary of the battle against racial prejudice, discrimination, bias, and systemic discrimination, Chief Wright and I recognize your pain. As the Air Force’s military leadership, we reflect on and acknowledge that what happens on America’s streets is also resident in our Air Force. Sometimes its explicit, sometimes it’s subtle, but we are not immune to the spectrum of racial prejudice, systemic discrimination, and unconscious bias. We see this in the apparent inequity in our application of military justice. We will not shy away from this; as leaders and as Airmen, we will own our part and confront it head on.

Chief Wright and I have had vastly different experiences growing up and during our time in the Air Force. His powerful OpED, WHO AM I, is a must read (attached). Please disseminate it across your wing.

So what to do? Discussing our different life experiences and viewpoints can be tough, uncomfortable, and therefore often avoided. But we have been presented a crisis. We can no longer walk by this problem.

We must look inward at our Air Force, and at every echelon of command, so we emerge stronger as a profession of arms. It was our very own General Benjamin O. Davis, Tuskegee Airman, who said, “The privileges of being an American belong to those brave enough to fight for them.”

It is time for every one of us to strive for understanding and a culture of inclusiveness and belonging across our Air Force.

I don’t have the answers, but I do know there is no room for bigotry, hatred or small mindedness in our force. Period. Every member of our team needs to know we have their back.

So let’s start the conversation acknowledging we have many valued Airmen who live and work for One Nation under God, indivisible ... but for them ... without liberty and justice for all.

Chief Wright and I will attack this together in the weeks and months ahead. Together with Secretary Barrett, we have directed the Air Force Inspector General to do an independent review of our legal system, racial injustice, and opportunities for advancement. On Wednesday evening at 1700 Eastern Time, we will host a Facebook town hall on this issue for 2 hours. We look forward to engaging with you. You can link in via <https://www.facebook.com/csafofficial/>.

Let’s get better together.

21

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